

Tyrrell Farm
6245 Fannet Road (Highway 124)
Beaumont Vicinity
Jefferson County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3369

HABS
TEX
123-BEAU.V,
1-

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Building Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TYRRELL FARM
HABS NO. TX-3369
Page 1

HABS
TEX
123-BEAU.
1-

Name: Tyrrell Farm

Location: The surveyed tract is located approximately 9.7 kilometers (6 miles) southwest of the Jefferson County Courthouse in Beaumont, Texas. It is situated 183 meters (600 feet) south of the intersection of State Highway 124 and Brooks Road.

Quad: Beaumont West, Texas, USGS 7.5' quadrangle, 1960; photorevised 1970 and 1974.

UTM: Zone 15: E 3 87 270, N 33 20 910

Present Owner: Ty-Tex Properties, Ltd.
P. O. Box 390
Beaumont, Texas 77704

Present Use: Vacant

Statement of Significance: The two-story portion of the Tyrrell tenant farmstead house, barn, and machine shed were constructed for or by an early twentieth-century immigrant from Iowa, and the buildings reflect the cultural origins of the owner. The mass immigration of agricultural populations from the Midwest between 1895 and World War 1 was a widespread phenomenon that had a major impact on the agricultural, economic, and cultural development of twentieth-century Texas. The buildings on the site appear to be typical of farm structures more often found on Midwestern farmsteads, and these associations add significance to the site. The property is associated with Captain William C. Tyrrell, a prominent capitalist and benefactor in Jefferson County, Texas.

Historian: Martha Doty Freeman, June 1991

Architect: Joe C. Freeman, AIA, June 1991

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: 1900-1910 (ca.)

2. Architect: None

3. Original and Subsequent Owners:

Captain William Casper Tyrrell: ca. 1900-December 31, 1919

W. C. Tyrrell Trust: 1919-1966

W. C. Tyrrell, Jr., as agent for the beneficiaries of the Trust: 1966-1981

Ty-Tex Properties, Ltd.: 1981-present (1991)

4. Builders, Contractors, and Suppliers: Unknown.

5. Original Plans and Construction: No original drawings were located. It is probable that no drawings of a formal nature were used.

6. Alterations and Additions: After Tyrrell's death in 1924, his son moved a one-story, two-room, frame building onto the site and attached it to the two-story frame house. The barn has had corrugated metal siding added over its original wood siding. The north side of the machine shed has had corrugated metal siding added to enclose that side of the building for wind protection.

B. Historical Context and Land History

The Tyrrell Farm is associated with events and historic patterns that are significant in the history of Texas and the United States. The complex is an example of an early twentieth-century farmstead. Architecturally, it is a manifestation of the widespread immigration of upper Midwestern populations to Texas prior to World War I, a mass migration that was fueled by the construction of railroads, availability of relatively inexpensive land, and a desire for fertile soils. At the same time, HABS No. TX-3369 is something of an anomaly in Jefferson County. Few agricultural buildings survive from the early part of the twentieth century, and the presence of structures such as a machine shed are atypical in a region dominated prior to 1900 by farmers from the Lower South.

The Tyrrell Farm is located in the south half of the Samuel Stivers League, a Mexican grant of 4,428 acres that was made to Stivers as a member of Lorenzo de Zavala's colony.[1] Stivers, a doctor and native of New Jersey, had immigrated to Texas by September 1834 when he and his family of eight settled in San Augustine.[2] He probably did not live on or use his land in present-day Jefferson County, choosing instead to live in San Augustine where he and his wife, Sarah, were buried.[3]

Stivers owned the league in Jefferson County until 1842 when he sold the south half of it to Stephen S. Thomkins of Harris County for \$930.00.[4] Shortly thereafter, Thomkins sold the land to J. R. A. Tomkins [sic] [5], who held it until April 4, 1878. At that point, the property was auctioned at a tax sale

[6], an indication that the owner's involvement with the land had been relatively negligible. The sale was brought to Tomkins's attention, and he redeemed the property on October 15, 1878.[7]

Sometime after 1878, J. R. A. Tomkins died, leaving the south half of the Stivers League to his five children: J. R., Joel M., James S., Dr. W. R. Tomkins and Mrs. Eliza Tomkins Harrison. After approximately a decade, the heirs began to sell their interests in the property to John H. Broocks, Jr.[8] Simultaneously, Broocks acquired most of the north half of the Stivers League from Stivers's descendants in transactions dated December 16, 1892, and February 21, 1893.[9] As a result, all but a few hundred acres of the league were owned by Broocks by 1895.

John H. Broocks, Jr., like the Stivers's descendants, was a resident of San Augustine whose family had immigrated to East Texas at an early date. His grandfather, General Travis Green Broocks, brought his family to San Augustine in 1838. His father, Colonel John Henry Broocks, served in the Mexican War, participated in the California gold rush, served in the Confederate Army, and then retired to a sizable plantation near San Augustine. John H. Broocks, Jr., was born in San Augustine County on March 15, 1862, educated there, and was licensed to practice law at Hemphill, Sabine County, in 1889. He apparently maintained offices in both San Augustine and Beaumont, where he practiced law and became involved in acquiring large tracts of land. The property southwest of Beaumont was one such tract; others included timbered land elsewhere in East Texas and in Santo Domingo, West Indies.[10]

There are no indications that Broocks lived on the Stivers League, and it seems more likely that he used it for agricultural purposes. In December 1895, he conveyed a right-of-way over the league to the Gulf and Interstate Railway Company of Texas (location of the current Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe tracks) in a conveyance that mentioned the existence of a warehouse and platform in the right-of-way area.[11] The existence of such improvements suggests that Broocks may have been engaged in the production of agricultural goods such as livestock or crops.

John H. Broocks, Jr., owned the Stivers property until March 29, 1898, when he sold it in two tracts to W. C. Tyrrell of Wright County, Iowa, for \$25,316.55 in cash and notes. One tract included the portion of the Stivers League that lay west of the railroad right-of-way less a 160-acre parcel in the northwest corner of the league that Broocks had sold to another individual at an earlier date.[12] The second tract, on which the subject property is located, included the portion of the Stivers League that lay east of the right-of-way and west of Double Point [Hillebrandt] Bayou.[13]

Captain William Casper Tyrrell, whose descendants own the subject tract today, was a prominent businessman and benefactor who was born in Pennsylvania in 1847 and moved to Iowa in 1854. He grew up on a farm near Oxford Junction and then moved to Wright County in 1868. During the next decade, he moved several times, acquiring farms and engaging in farming, stock raising and trading, and the farm implement business. After 1881, when the first railroad entered Wright County, Tyrrell became involved in the promotion of land to new settlers, and it was his interest in land promotion that brought him to Port Arthur, Texas, in 1898. It may have been on this trip that he found and purchased the Stivers League, for he apparently returned to Iowa and did not settle permanently in Jefferson County until 1900.[14]

Shortly after Tyrrell made his second trip to Texas, the Lucas Gusher came in and Spindletop was developed. In response, he organized the Heywood Oil Company. Later, Tyrrell organized the Pulaski Oil Company of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Simultaneously, he acquired thousands of acres of rural land,

developed residential lots, became involved in the American National Bank of Beaumont, the Tyrrell Rice Milling Company, Tyrrell Wilson Investment Company, and Tyrrell Hardware Company. Tyrrell also remained interested in the promotion of suburban properties, organizing a realty company and planning for an intensive farming and fruit-growing enterprise in Harris County which would be supported by small farm owners.[15]

According to a descendant and evidence from a 1913 soil survey map of Jefferson County, Tyrrell had the complex at Brooks Switch on the Gulf and Interstate Railroad line built between 1900 and 1910.[16] At that point, the site consisted of a two-story house, a barn, two clay-tile silos which were located near the barn, and a machine shed. A descendant recalls that the last feature on the site was an unusual one for the area and reflected Captain Tyrrell's Midwestern agricultural heritage: in Iowa, farmers always sheltered their equipment rather than leaving it vulnerable to the elements.[17] Renters lived on the property which was run as a combination rice farm and cattle operation. Hay was kept in the barn, and rice was stored in a wooden granary that was located across present-day State Highway 124 at Brooks Switch and later was moved to Amelia, a small community west of Beaumont on U.S. Highway 90.[18]

Captain Tyrrell owned the subject tract on the Stivers League until December 31, 1919, when he and his four children formed a trust or joint stock association. On the same day, Tyrrell deeded his holdings in the Stivers League to his children, and they in turn deeded the land back to Tyrrell as trustee for the Tyrrell Trust in exchange for shares of participation in the trust.[19]

Captain Tyrrell died in Beaumont on September 8, 1924 [20], and shortly thereafter, his children divided the assets of the trust. His son, W. C. Tyrrell, Jr., received the share that included the subject tract on the Stivers League. Subsequently, he is believed to have increased the size of the house on the tract by moving in a one-story, two-room structure and attaching it to the rear of the original house.[21] He continued to operate the property as a farm, and it remains a rural agricultural tract today.

On the Stivers League at Brooks Switch is an early twentieth-century farmstead that was constructed by or for Captain H. C. Tyrrell of Iowa shortly after he moved to Jefferson County, Texas. The complex was occupied by employees or tenants of the Tyrrell family whose residence was in Beaumont. The tenants lived in the two-story residence and used the balance of the tract to raise rice and cattle.

For the most part, the site probably appears much as it did during the ca. 1900-1930 period. Alterations to the site include the destruction or removal of two clay-tile silos and deterioration of the barn and machine shed. Alterations to the two-story house include the replacement of one wooden window on the front facade with an aluminum window, the probable alteration of the front porch, and the alteration of most interior finishes on the first floor.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The site is comprised of one residential and two agricultural buildings. HABS No. TX-3369-A is a two-story dwelling with a one-story rear ell. HABS No. TX-3369-B is a one-story machine shed. HABS No. TX-3369-C is a one-and-one-half-story barn. Two banked dirt and gravel driveways enter the site at two points from State Highway 124. The driveways join south of HABS No. TX-3369-A and then continue in an easterly direction toward a wooded area. The buildings form an agricultural complex in a rural, southeastern Texas landscape. The character of the site and buildings is that of a working farm (see photographic documentation HABS No. TX-3369-1 through HABS No. TX-3369-3 and HABS drawings, Sheet 1). The buildings are distinctly utilitarian, built of common materials, and are without ornament. The dwelling has a distinctly Midwestern character, while the barn and machine shed are lacking in character-defining detail.

1. General Setting and Orientation: The site is an open uncultivated area approximately 9.7 kilometers (6 miles) southwest of the Jefferson County Courthouse in Beaumont, Texas, and south of the intersection of Brooks Road and State Highway 124. The site is bounded on the northwest by the highway and on the northeast, southeast, and southwest by trees. The site slopes gently toward Willow Marsh Bayou to the southeast. The dwelling was oriented to the road, while the barn and machine shed were placed to facilitate agricultural operations.
2. Historic Landscape Design: Extensive ground cover composed of several types of grass blankets the site. The site also contains several species of mature and sapling trees, including pines, oaks, tallows, hackberries, and willows. Since the site has ceased to be permanently occupied, encroachment of vegetation has increased.
3. Outbuildings: Outbuildings to the dwelling structure, in addition to the machine shed and barn, included a pump house which was recently demolished.

PART III: ENDNOTES

1. Texas, General Land Office, Spanish Archives, File 54:61, Samuel Stivers Grant.
2. Marion Day Mullins, *The First Census of Texas, 1829-1836, To Which are Added Texas Citizenship Lists, 1821-1845 and Other Early Records of the Republic of Texas* (Washington, D.C.: National Genealogical Society, 1959), 1-2; Gifford White, ed., *Character Certificates in the General Land Office of Texas* (Nacogdoches, Texas: Ericson Books, 1985), 176.
3. Carolyn Reeves Ericson, *Nacogdoches—Gateway to Texas*, vol. II, *A Biographical Dictionary 1850-1880* (Nacogdoches, Texas: Ericson Books, 1987), 381.
4. Jefferson County, Texas, *Deed Record D*:486-487.
5. *Ibid.*, *Deed Record S*:124-125.
6. *Ibid.*, 157-127.

7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., *Deed Record* 7:238-240; ibid., *Deed Record* 9:224-225; ibid., *Deed Record* 10:310-312; ibid., *Deed Record* 28:105-108.
9. Ibid., *Deed Record* E:289; ibid., *Deed Record* 7:231-232, 234-235.
10. Frank W. Johnson, *A History of Texas and Texans*, vol. 4 (Chicago: The American Historical Society, 1914), 2530-2532.
11. Jefferson County, Texas, *Deed Record* 27:453-454.
12. Ibid., *Deed Record* 28:135-136.
13. Ibid., *Deed Record* 27:199-201.
14. The American Historical Society, Inc., *American Biography: A New Cyclopedia*, vol. 43 (New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1930), 46-47.
15. Ibid., 47.
16. W. C. Tyrrell, Jr., and Frank A. Eastman, interview by Martha Doty Freeman, Writter's notes, Beaumont, Texas, 9 November 1990; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Soils, *Texas, Jefferson County Sheet*, 1913.
17. Tyrrell and Eastman.
18. Ibid.
19. Jefferson County, Texas, *Deed Record* 190:597-602; ibid., *Deed Record* 193:446-449.
20. "News Items," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 29 (October 1924):176.
21. Tyrrell and Eastman.
22. Ibid.

PART IV: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original Architectural Drawings: No original drawings were found.
- B. Early Views: No earlier photographs were located.

C. Interviews:

Tyrrell, W. C., Jr., and Frank A. Eastman. Interview by Martha Doty Freeman. Written notes. Beaumont, Texas. 9 November 1990.

D. Bibliography/References Cited:

1. Primary and unpublished sources

Jefferson County, Texas. *Deed Records*.

Texas. General Land Office. Spanish Archives. File 54:61. Samuel Stivers Grant.

2. Secondary and published sources

American Historical Society, Inc., The. 1930. *American Biography: A New Cyclopedia*, vol. 43. New York: The American Historical Society, Inc.

Ericson, Carolyn Reeves. 1987. *Nacogdoches—Gateway to Texas*. Vol. II. *A Biographical Directory 1850–1880*. Nacogdoches, Texas: Ericson Books.

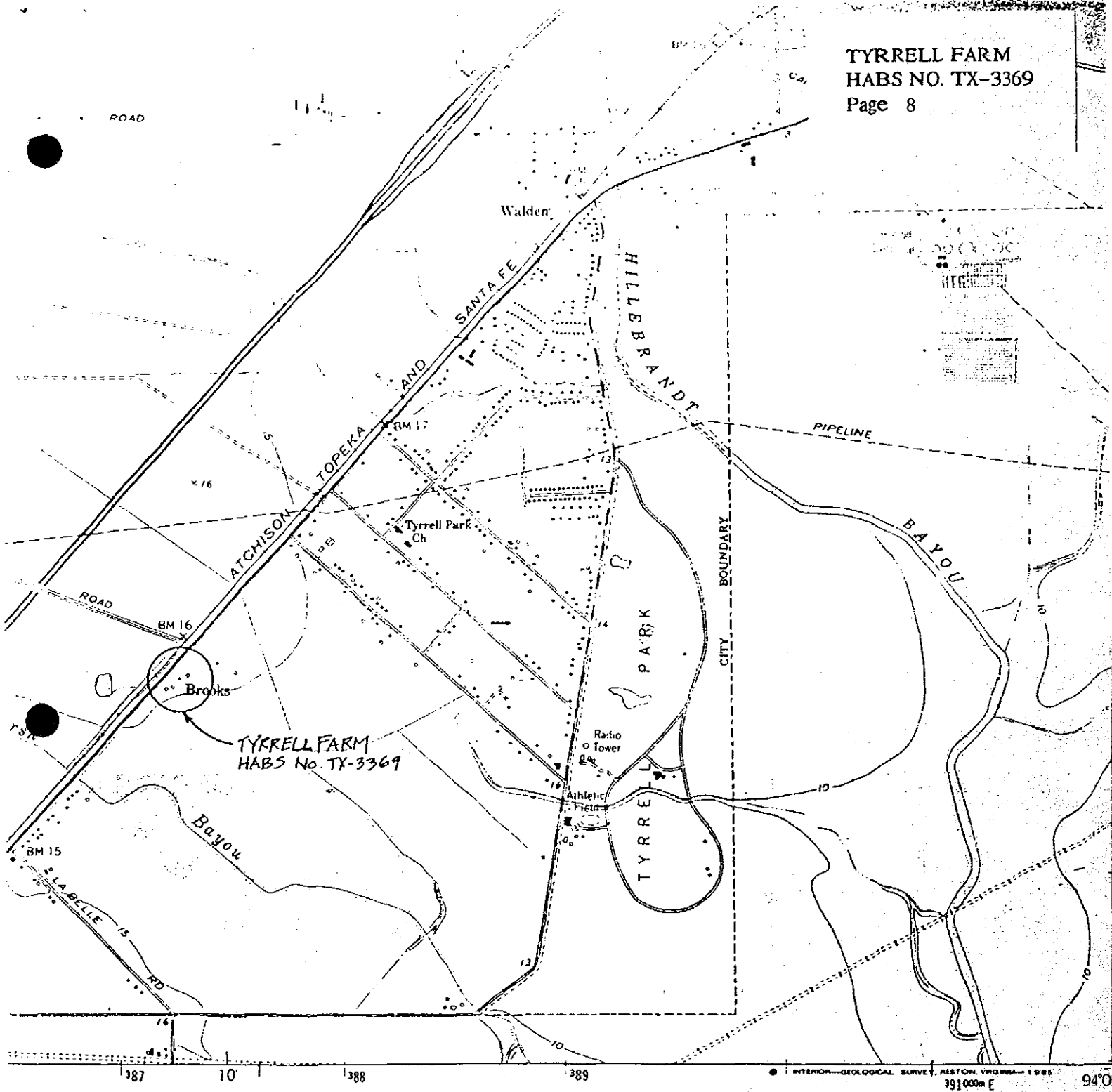
Johnson, Frank W. 1914. *A History of Texas and Texans*, vol. 5. Chicago: The American Historical Society.

Mullins, Marion Day. 1959. *The First Census of Texas, 1829–1836, To Which are Added Texas Citizenship Lists, 1821–1845 and Other Early Records of the Republic of Texas*. Washington, D.C.: National Genealogical Society.

"News Items." *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 29 (October 1924):173–176.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. Bureau of Soils. 1913. *Texas, Jefferson County Sheet*.

White, Gifford, ed. 1985. *Character Certificates in the General Land Office*. Nacogdoches, Texas: Ericson Books.



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty _____ Light-duty _____
Medium-duty _____ Unimproved dirt _____
Interstate Route U.S. Route State Route

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